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1982 Volvo B10M Plaxton Viewmaster, 49 seats, o/c continental door, toilet, driver's bunk, drinks machine, power door, tinted windows, livery white, autumn tint moquette, MoT March 1990.

MAN

1982 SR 280, 46 recliners, Sutrak air conditioning, 6 speed gearbox, o/s centre power door, o/s centre sunken toilet, driver's bunk, fridge, drinks machine, tinted double glazed windows, Rollo blinds, courier seat, Webasto and timer, seat back nets, headrest covers, wheel discs, driver's locker. (For its year, must be the CLEANEST of its type in England).

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1980 Ford R1114 Duple Dominant Express, 53 seats red moq, livery white/blue.

1979 Ford R1114 Duple Dominant Express, 53 seats, Bristol dome, grey/blue moq, livery blue.

1975 Ford R1114, 53 seater Duple Dominant Express, red moq, livery white/blue/yellow.

LEYLAND

1982 Leyland Tiger '245' 12 metre Plaxton Supreme V, 50/55 reclining seats, Telma, private plate, choice of two.

1981 Leyland Leopard, 11 metre, Plaxton Supreme Express, 53 remoquetted seats, ZF 6-speed, MoT July 1990.

1981 Leyland Leopard, 12 metre Plaxton Supreme IV, 49 Chapman reclining seats, ZF 6-speed manual gearbox, Bristol dome, destination gear. Livery white, autumn tint moquette. MoT.

1980 Leyland Leopard 12 metre Supreme, 53 re-moquetted seats, Bristol dome, 6 sp ZF gearbox, side lockers, MoT 01.09.90.

1981 Leyland Leopard Duple Dominant, 53 seats, red moquette, livery white, new MoT.

BEDFORD

1984 Bedford 10 metre YMP Plaxton Paramount, 38 reclining seats, Telma, private plate, choice of two.

1981 Bedford YNT 53 seater Plaxton, side lockers, autumn tint moquette, livery white blue/yellow stripes.

1976 Bedford YMT, 53 seater Plaxton Express, radio, white/red livery, red moq.

1976 Bedford PJK Duple Dominant, 29 seats, Autumn tint moquette, livery white/green.

1975 Bedford YRQ, 45 seater Plaxton, power door, livery blue/yellow, red moquette.

1974 Bedford YRT Duple Dominant, 53 seater, power door, red moq, livery white.

1973 Bedford YRT Duple Dominant, 53 seater, power door, red moq, livery white.

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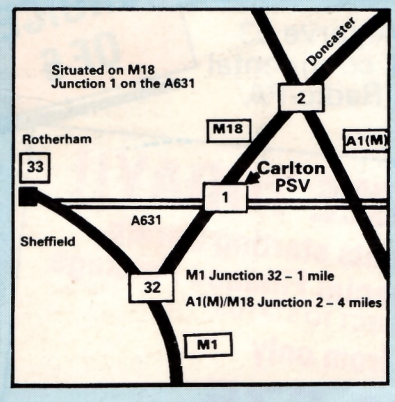

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CONTENTS

Coachmart

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FEATURES

Road test with a Difference 18
Rod Davey goes back in time to test a Bedford OB, against a surprising scenic backdrop.

News Review of 1989 22
Coachmart editor Alan Millar casts his eagle eye over the news stories which made the headlines in 1989.

Christmas Quiz 16
In keeping with the Yuletide season we've compiled a special fun-packed quiz to test your skill and knowledge as you relax after your festive fare of Turkey and mince-pies.

REGULARS

News 6
The BCC sets out its Budget shopping list with a request to the Chancellor for 100 per cent capital allowances; ScotMan airport service on target; Parkinson's London road plan receives a mixed reception.

On Target 10
Marksman slips into the spirit of the season with a specially-written pantomime special, in which he dips into the bran-tub of life and makes a wish for Christmas Future.

Letters 25
Your letters roll in on the subject of the driving manners of those 'Knights of the Road', lorry drivers; Nostalgia Corner provides another fascinating flashback into the golden days of coaching.

Parkinson's plan for London gets mixed reception

CECIL Parkinson's plan for London's road and rail network may put an end to illegal bus-lane parking... but cram still more cars into the jam-packed city.

The scheme involves a 300-mile network of strictly-controlled clearways, an army of 2,000 traffic wardens with powers to have vehicles towed away, and a bigger city rail network. The Transport Secretary says a number of ideas for new 'public transport' will be considered... but operators say he's missed the point.

'We don't want more cars in London, we want less,' said Keith Myers, chairman of the London Tourist Coach Operators' Association. 'This just doesn't address any of our problems.

'The Government should be limiting the number of vehicles by issuing essential car user permits, or some similar scheme.'

Myers is also worried about the proposed 'red routes', which may be sited along tourist areas and effectively make them a no-go area for coach set-down and pick-up... a point which also worries the Bus and Coach Council.

'Certainly the red routes could cause problems if legitimate operators are prosecuted,' said the BCC's David Watson. 'But in general, the BCC says two cheers for the scheme.

Parkinson.

'We welcome any initiative that is aimed at easing the traffic flow, but it loses one 'cheer' because we have reservations about the application of the scheme. If a red route is sited along, for example, the Thames Embankment, the Government has got to make other arrangements so that tourism does not suffer.'

In his statement, the Transport Secretary says: 'Public transport improvements are needed but they cannot by themselves solve the traffic and environmental problems however much we invest in the rail system.' This comment, which implies that Mr Parkinson regards only rail travel as public transport, caused some offence to Watson.

'Once again the bus is seen as just being there. My personal belief is that the Government has a very poor public transport policy, and virtually no overall philosophy.'

The red route system may, however, see the return of the commuter coach, says Watson, which drifted away as congestion made speedy entry and exit from London impossible.

The Metropolitan Police said they welcomed the initiative: 'We look forward to consultation over the details,' said the head of traffic policy and support, Chief Superintendent Peter Wiglesworth. 'It's not coincidental that the proposals are in keeping with our current policy.

'It is very important that PSVs are included in the document, and it must be remembered that the Government intends to fully consult all interested parties before making any firm decision.'

In answer to claims that the new routes would merely encourage more cars into London, Wiglesworth said: 'There is no practical way to stop cars coming into London. We have got to facilitate the movement of traffic as a whole, but the level will remain constant. Worrying about levels of traffic is simply not practical.'

MMC probe for Highland Scottish

FOLLOWING its verdict that Highland Scottish had acted anti-competitively against the now-defunct Inverness Traction, the OFT has referred the matter to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

The OFT conceded that two points in its original report may have been misleading. The 'unregistered services' referred to in the report are said to have meant duplicate buses which HS ran on registered routes. It further accepts that the reference to accumulated funds held by SBG did not imply that HS had used them to finance a loss.

But now the OFT has decided undertakings it claims were offered by HS are unacceptable, and its director general Sir Godon Borrie has referred the matter to the MMC... the first time a bus company has come under its scrutiny for alleged predatory behaviour.

'We first of all refute that we have made any undertakings,' said HS managing director Jim Moffat. 'We will be happy to co-operate with the MMC'.

Moor Dale snapped up

PROUDMUTUAL has bought Moor Dale and its subsidiary Rochester and Marshall in an amicable deal for an undisclosed sum.

Proudmutual, which owns Northumbria Motor Services and Kentish Bus and Coach, is to allow both firms to continue operating as before, under the management team of Eddie Dunn and Robert Armstrong. The fare stage routes run by them will continue, and private and contract hire - the bulk of their business - will remain unchanged.

'There comes a time when you must sit down and take stock of your situation,' said former owner Eddie Dunn. 'We had turned down other bids, but the offer from Proudmutual was a reasonable one, and left us here to run the business as before. There was no pressure to sell.'

With the purchase of the share capital comes 50 vehicles - about half coaches - R & M's premises in Great Whittington, and Moor Dale's in Dudley and Eldon Square, Newcastle.

Hilditch resigns

GEOFFREY Hilditch has resigned from the board of the Drawlane Transport Group, the second biggest grouping of privatised National Bus subsidiaries.

Hilditch, former manager of the Cynon Valley, Leicester, Halifax and Great Yarmouth undertakings, joined Drawlane as group managing director as it began to build up its empire. The group has since devolved many central responsibilities to MDs and financial directors of the operating companies and Hilditch had more recently been in a non-executive role.

His son, Christopher, is MD of Midland Red North, one of Drawlane's operating companies.

Drawlane chairman Ray McEnhill told Coachmart: 'I have no doubt that Geoffrey's contribution to Drawlane was enormous in the early stages.'

Renault to make 300 redundant

RENAULT's announcement of 300 redundancies at its Dunstable plant will not curb its production of minibus and midibus chassis, says the firm.

The job losses mainly affect machining shops devoted to van and truck components, said a spokesman, and Renault is still developing its bus chassis programme, for which sales are booming.

'This is more of a rationalisation than anything,' said the spokesman. 'It has been brought about chiefly by the demise of two of our other vehicles.'

High Court injunction keeps Clayton Jones on the road

WELSH operator Clayton Jones has kept his 41-vehicle fleet on the road with a last-ditch High Court injunction.

Following revocation of Jones' O licences by the deputy traffic commissioner, and disqualification of both Jones and his wife from holding or obtaining a licence for two years, Jones merely continued running the vehicles, and this led to them being flagged down in the street by police.

He is now free to continue running the services until a Traffic Tribunal is convened to reconsider the case. The revocation would have led to the loss of 70 jobs, said Jones.

Quinn quits Leyland

LEYLAND Bus sales and marketing director Owen Quinn is leaving the group at the end of March to pursue other interests. Quinn, who came from the truck industry, was part of the short-lived management buy-out in 1987, and was subsequently charged with amalgamating the Volvo and Leyland marketing organisations. This task is now almost complete, and he has made amicable arrangements to leave in 1990.

Christmas bonus for Coachmart readers

THE annual The Choice is Yours guide to the coach and bus chassis, bodies and integrals available to UK operators in 1990 is published with the November/December issue of Coachworld which is being mailed to all Coachmart subscribers.

For the first time, the guide gives details of warranty cover for new chassis as well as comparing the levels of standard and optional trim available on British and imported vehicles.

Other features in Coachworld are profiles of Capital Coaches, Central Coachways and of Scottish Citylink MD Alan Howes. The management magazine also looks at investment appraisal, management skills training and marketing.

New Year goodies

Coachmart will be back on January 4 with the first issue of 1990, packed with a road test of a Cummins re-engined Bedford, a review of our 1989 road tests and a profile of Summerfield Coaches, our 1989 Operator of the Year.

ScotMan express on the road at last

GRANGEBURN's ScotMan cross-border airport express service to Manchester is finally up and running, with the company planning inroads to three other cities in England and Wales.

The service has not been without hitches, having first faced delays by Telecom connecting its Freefone booking line. Its TV advertising also went awry, with only a third of its planned programme appearing, and some of it in the wee hours...ostensibly to appeal to insomniac students.

ScotMan boss Joe Nolan has now been further frustrated by an industrial dispute at Manchester Airport affecting flights, but claims these minor problems will not affect ScotMan's plans.

'I'm not expecting anything like full loads until after Easter,' he told Coachmart. 'We can sustain the service all winter carrying only a dozen people each way, and had planned exactly that.'

Easter looks like being a turning point for the business, since ScotMan should then have taken delivery of its LAG Eos integral, have placed firm orders for a further two, and have moved on to a new 3.5-acre site.

'We're looking into services to three other major cities south of the border, and two in Scotland,' Nolan said. 'We haven't got the overheads of the bigger companies, so we can afford any kind of price war they might fight us with.'

Nolan says the competing express route operators are already running too lean to be able to sustain loss-making routes. He also foresees problems for operators doing their work.

'No matter which way I work it out, luxury express coaches cost 80p to 85p a mile to run. Some operators are getting 65p to 70p, which might produce turnover in the short term but will lead to losses in the long term. Just depreciation of a £100,000 coach costs 17p a mile,' he said.

Nolan's aim is to have 20 operating licences by the end of 1990. The number has already risen from five in '88 to ten this year.

Sealink terminal opens

OPERATORS using Harwich for channel crossings should find things a little more comfortable with the opening of Sealink's new £3 million terminal.

Improved walkways, meeting areas, escalators, coffee shop, better seating and ventilation have been fitted so that passengers get airport-style treatment before boarding.

Hot seat for Wickens

THE VL group has 'poached' Leyland Bus man Adrian Wickens to handle its product planning from Volvo's corporate HQ in Sweden.

Forthcoming EC emission legislation - and the constant changes affecting PSVs - put Wickens in the hot seat with regard to development of cleaner and more efficient vehicles.

Hopkins

On the move

RON Hopkins MBE has retired from Ribble Motor Services of Preston after a lifetime in the industry. Hopkins started as an apprentice in 1938. He was awarded his MBE in 1976, and sits on the Preston Magistrates bench. He retired from his post as engineering services manager.

EASTERN National has appointed two new depot controllers for Walthamstow and Ponders End. Nick Hunt is at the latter, and former LRT and Grey Green man Roy James is at Walthamstow.

Operating costs fall except in London

PUBLIC sector support for the bus industry is virtually unchanged, while operating costs per bus mile outside London have been reduced, says a Government report.

While the level of revenue support from the public sector fell in real terms, increased payments in fuel duty rebate offset the figure, says the Bus and Coach Statistics report for '88/89.

Altogether, buses outside London were used to make 4 billion journeys- one per cent fewer than '87/88, mainly due to decreased journeys in the English shires. Bus fares went up in line with retail prices, while cost per bus mile fell seven per cent.

In the years since de-regulation, there are 18 per cent more bus miles being operated and £120 million less local authority support for public transport.

* The report is available from HMSO outlets, priced £8.70.

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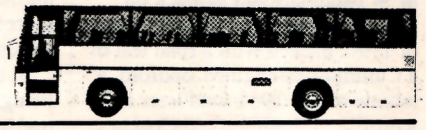

'COACHMART' Says

THANKS, but is it enough?

That is our immediate reaction to Transport Secretary Cecil Parkinson's announcement of massive measures to try to unclog London's traffic problems by investing in and traffic management schemes, by expanding public transport and by stepping up enforcement of parking regulations.

This is a Christmas present not only for London, but for any coach operator in the country who operates into, or across, the capital.

Time, energy and money is wasted in clogged traffic today. Tempers are frayed, passengers are frustrated, vehicles are worn out unnecessarily and safety is compromised by traffic conditions which make progress little faster than was possible before the motor age.

Express and commuter coach operators want to have more confidence that their schedules can be met.

Excursion, tour and private hire operators want to be able to reach major tourist attractions with more ease.

Better road junctions, fewer cars on the road and the removal of parked cars from the key routes into London, will help achieve these aims.

But as Coachmart has highlighted in recent weeks, this is only part of the problem.

Once through those clearer roads, those coaches all need somewhere to park. Those parking spaces need to be sited conveniently to encourage drivers to use them and they need to be more inviting than the potholed bomb sites - often in the wrong parts of London - which pass for coach parks today.

No one is taking the initiative to provide these coach parks. There is no London-wide traffic authority. Individual boroughs see coaches as a necessary evil best parked out of their boundaries. Private developers do not recognise a business opportunity in coach parking.

We say someone must take responsibility for this omission.

And who better to lead the way than Cecil Parkinson? He recognises that traffic chaos needs to be tackled and is prepared to be radical in his approach.

It requires only a further step to recognise that effective coach parking, on properly developed, well-equipped sites near to coach destinations will make its own contribution to unblocking London and will boost further the tourist income of the nation.

It is a message which will carry even more weight with Mr Parkinson if he knows it is the view of the coach industry.

We will tell him. We can tell him with more force if you will write and tell us what you think should be done. We would like nothing better than to pass on a sackful of mail.

Tell us and we will tell him.

Editor

BCC lobbies the Chancellor for tax and duty benefits

CHANCELLOR John Major is in the firing line for a major initiative from the BCC to promote the use of public transport.

Encouraging the bus and coach industry to develop, by offering better tax and duty benefits, will combat pollution and ease traffic congestion, says the BCC in a pre-Budget campaign.

The measures recommended by the BCC include offering tax relief on commuter season tickets and travel passes, the retention of the fuel duty rebate for bus services, and the re-introduction of 100 per cent first-year tax allowances for bus and coach purchase.

The BCC's director general Veronica Palmer said: 'We believe these modest measures would give significant benefits to the whole community. Compared with the recently-announced £13 billion expenditure for transport - for which we will not see the benefits for many years - the BCC proposals could bear fruit in a matter of months.'

Calculations suggest that if only five per cent of current car journeys were made by bus, 250,000 tonnes of pollutants would be eliminated each year. With Britain's environmental policy now coming under fire from the EC, the pre-Budget submission would appear well-targeted.

The BCC defended suggestions that it should have lobbied against the current excise duty on PSVs: 'We decided to keep our pre-budget submission short and achievable,' said a spokesman. 'We will continue to lobby elsewhere against the high vehicle tax.'

On the move

BUSWAYS Travel has appointed Ian Coull as manager of its Armstrong Galley and Blue Bus Services operations.

Coull (30) joined the industry as a driver for Kelvin Scottish in 1982, joining Sunderland Busways as traffic superintendent in 1988.

Ian Coull.

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TRANSIT COACHBUILT, 20 moq seats, full luxury spec, available January. Please ring for full spec.

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1984 (A) FIAT PETROL, 12 seater, annual June 1989, very clean vehicle. **£3,950.**

1980 (V) 16 SEATER TRANSIT, petrol, annual February 90. **£3,500.**

1976 (P) TRANSIT PETROL, welfare and TAILLIFT dormobile. **£950.**

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1984 (B) TRANSIT DIESEL, overdrive, 16 high back moquette seats, high spec, annual Feb. **£8,250.**

1986 (D) FREIGHT ROVER + 5 STANDEES, power door, service bus.

1983 (Y) MERCEDES 508D, 19 high back moquette seats, Bristol dome, boot, annual Dec '90. **£10,950.**

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1987 (D) TALBOT DIESEL Crystals, high spec, 14 seater. **£8,500.**

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BY MARKSMAN ON target

It's Pantomime time again, so perhaps a few lighthearted lines will not come amiss - even though there may be some spiky holly leaves of serious undertone lurking in this tinsel-draped Christmas production. Like everything I write in this column - the gift-wrapped gems of this script are factually correct.

In the latter quarter of 1989 Santa, in the form of one of the remaining nationalised industries, owed me rather more than £46,000 for getting the workers into his toy manufactory each day. Now, that's a lot of reindeer fodder to any business, but giant haystacks to a small firm like mine. I therefore resolved to beard Santa in his den about handing over a sackful of cash.

Like much of national and local government, Santa requires invoices for 13, four weekly, periods each year rather than nice, traditional, months. I told him that I expected payment on normal commercial terms, i.e. had it been monthly accounts, by the 20th of the month following; but, as it was four weekly periods, I expected payment within 20 days of invoicing.

Would you ever believe the answer? Although this genial old git in a red coat required invoicing every four weeks, his payments section works monthly and that, 'Payments are made at the end of the month following receipt of the invoice'. In other words if a four-weekly period ended on 27th October and I got my invoice in before the end of that month, I might expect payment near the end of November. But if my invoice bore a November date, then with luck, payment might come down the chimney on Christmas morn - long after the banks have closed.

What, you may be wondering, is so very funny about that? Only that when Lord Young was at the Department of Trade & Industry he urged large businesses to pay smaller concerns promptly. It was, of course, as likely to come to pass as a reply to a letter to Santa Claus. But, in the hope that, occasionally, wishes do come true, might Lord Young or his successor ask the Christmas Tree Fairy to point the wand of Prompt Payment at nationalised industries too. Please, Santa, I simply MUST have it!

What virtually every reader of this publication would wish for is that Michael Portillo would see sense on the subject of the use of microphones in coaches. It seems that the smokescreen puffed up by the vested interests of couriers and the jaundiced view of Chief Constables, prevents him from really seeing what he is pulling out of the bran-tub. What's this little goodie I see in the same draft Regulation as the matter of coach microphones? 'A driver... shall not smoke in or on a [PSV] vehicle except [when] the vehicle is hired as a whole and the person concerned has the permission of the operator and the agreement of the hirer'

Yes, you read it correctly despite the smoke in Michael's Magical Grotto: a driver on a private hire can not use the microphone as it is considered dangerous, but he can pull out a cigarette or cigar and light it up while driving - or even puff at a pipe as long as he has the required agreement. Despite the clear danger, despite the huge anti-smoking lobby, despite the voluntary trends in all the transportation industries towards banning all smoking; the Magician promises us this as a New Year present from his lucky dip. Please, Paul Daniels of the Department of Transport, can I put this unwanted gift, this 'dangerous to children' toy, back in the bran tub and have another dip to try and find the lucky, harmless and much wanted microphone instead?

Fairies, as any child knows, live in a little dream world of their own. Have you ever imagined a Vehicle Inspector wearing gossamer wings in place of the khaki overall? Well, I would tell you all a fairy story, but you can read it for yourself in a short publication called VTP5. This fantasy interprets Section 20, that bit of the Public Passenger Vehicles Act about notifiable alterations. According to this dream-writ document, we mortal coach operators must tell they with gossamer wings of alterations such as; 'The fitting or removal of such items as toilets, televisions, video receivers, drinks dispensers etc.' Together with, 'Any alteration which changes the seating capacity.'

Could someone please bring these fairies to life and tell them that, out in the real world, we whip seats, tables and demountable toilets in and out of our pumpkins faster than Father Christmas nails wheels to toy trains? This Peter Pan, at least, has grown up and just does not believe the fairy stories any more. If the fairies spend all their time watching us change seats and suchlike they just won't have time to see what the really naughty boys are doing, let alone doing the good fairy act on the miscreants.

The Captain Hooks have some funny notions too. Twice during the year I have read of Commissioners saying that passengers should never be asked to push coaches. They have made operators walk the plank because their passengers have enjoyed this little excitement. Of course, I would agree with the sentiment in principle as long as never, Gilbertesque wise, really means not often. If coaches are being pushed frequently or in home locations, I agree that the plank is well deserved. But I too should walk the plank if never really means never. Perhaps once in five years I have had starter motors fail late at night and/or in remote places. In these circumstances passengers far prefer to lend a hand with a bump start than wait hours for a fitter or a replacement vehicle to be summoned.

These Paragons of perfection do not always get their pantomime lines right in any case. Early in November I sent two local service variations to my local Traffic Area. Both services ran cross boundary into another Traffic Area. I presume the 'parent' area copies applications and forwards them to the secondary area so that they are informed of what is going on in their patch.

In this case I got a pair of communications dated 13th November 1989 from the secondary Traffic Area which thanked me for my application to Register these services for which the Commissioner had allocated a reference number, had determined that the full 42 days notice was not required and therefore authorised commencement of the services on 26th October 1987!

The very next day a pair of receipts for Applications to Vary these same registrations followed. Again Captain Hook had kindly agreed that a full 42 days notice was not required (even though no such request had been made in the primary Traffic Area), so these variations could start on 6th March 1989. Could the panto prompter please make Captain Hook and his crew get their lines right?

Happy Christmas to all participants in this, the Coach Operators' Pantomime!

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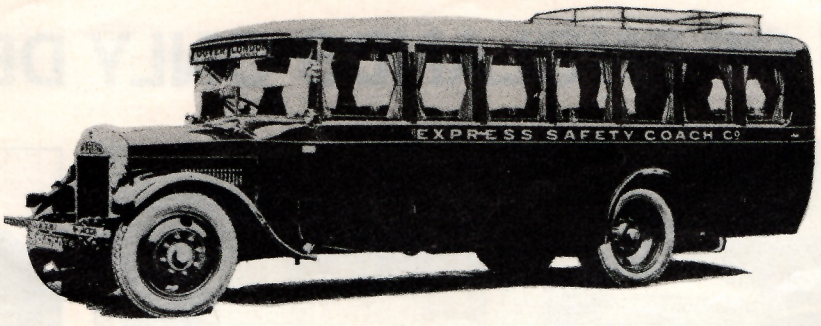

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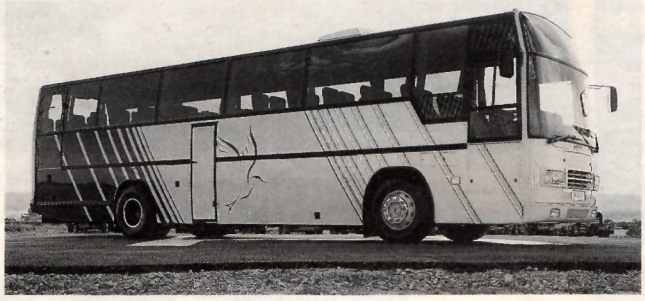

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Pearce fleet grows

Photographed in native surroundings is the latest addition to the Pearce Private Hire fleet, Oxford.

The coach, a DAF SB 2305 DHTD, is powered by 8.25 litre turbocharged engine, producing 213 bhp and 519 lbf.ft torque, driving through a ZF S6.65 six speed gearbox with two-speed splitter.

Supplied by Hughes DAF, the Duple 320 SL coachwork has 57 reclining seats, curtains, full soft trim and carpeted gangway.

Fleet livery of yellow/brown/white has been applied to match the other nine vehicles in the fleet.

Duple for Blue Coaches

Blue Saloon Coaches, Guildford, Surrey, have taken delivery of the Duple 425 integral pictured awaiting collection from Yeates.

The 425 is powered by Cummins LT10 6 cylinder turbocharged and intercooled rear mounted engine, producing 290 bhp at 2200 rpm and drives through ZF gearbox. Built to an overall height of 3.4 metres, and length of 12 metres, the coach has 55 reclining seats, soft trim, radio/PA/cassette and courier seat.

It is finished in Blue Saloon's white and duo blue livery.

Luxury mini-coach

Albert Jeys of Meadway Executive, Birmingham, recently collected this new Toyota Optimo GL 21 seat luxury mini-coach from Salvador Caetano (UK) Ltd.

The GL specification includes full-size coach features such as: power plug door, courier seat, tinted windows, audio system, and soft trim.

Park and Ride trio

Three new Mercedes-Benz 709Ds with 25 seat Reeve Burgess 'Beaver' bodies have begun operation with Maidstone and District.

The special yellow and green livery is for a six-day-a-week Park and Ride service operated on behalf of Maidstone Borough Council. Two vehicles are required for the service - the third is painted in normal green and cream fleet livery, but is available as a spare for the Park and Ride.

ACE acquistion

Salvador Caetano (UK) Ltd have supplied this Caetano Algarve 3.55 metre coach to ACE Taxis of Mansfield, Nottinghamshire.

Mounted on DAF SB3000 DKV integral module, the specification includes: reclining seats, continental door, tinted windows, full draw curtains, Blaupunkt radio/PA/cassette, full soft trim, and centre gangway carpet.

ACE will be using the 49/53 seat coach on up-market executive private hire work.

Christmas Quiz

You feel about as stuffed as the turkey, you've collapsed in an armchair, and the kids are, at last, playing with their new toys. What now? Why not try Coachmart's Christmas brainteaser. Some of the questions are serious, some tricky, and some just plain silly. Answers are on page 25.

1: JANUARY - Leyland took what was reputed to be its biggest order since 1977. Who wanted the fleet of Lynxes?

2:A coach driver picks up a party organised by the man who married his sister. The organiser watches the coach leave from outside his workplace, but both the driver's sister and her husband are on it. Where is the coach picking up?

3:FEBRUARY - Twenty three PSV passengers were arrested for alleged fraud involving tickets. Which company initiated the crack-down?

4: MARCH - Management take control of Silver Coach Lines with a team headed by Ivan Ford. Who owned the firm?

5:APRIL - The National Coach Rally at Blackpool sports a luxury coach which is on-the-road accommodation for rock groups UB40, Texas and Simple Minds. Who owns the coach?

6:A man takes a chance, and moments later has to push his car to the jail past buildings owned by his three best friends. What is going on?

7: MAY - Cambridgeshire's Cambus decides to split itself geographically. The Southern section retains the Cambus name, but the name for the North is not announced. What was it to become?

8: JUNE - Plaxton more than doubles in turnover with the takeover of another vehicle builder. Which one?

9:What's the difference between Fagin and a bad coach operator?

10: JULY - "This is a very sad event and a sad end," said a company's chief executive. "After years of recovery from the brink, recent developments in the industry have left us with no alternative." Which company was it that became a part of coachbuilding history?

11: AUGUST - Turmoil in Scotland as Stagecoach sells its express coaching operation and the Monopolies and Mergers Commisssion force an end to an agreement between the two major express operators... which ones?

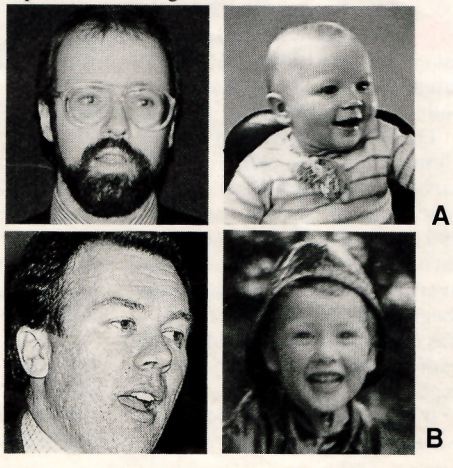
12: SEPTEMBER - Renault lands its biggest minibus order of the year. The 90 S75 vehicles are to go to LBL subsidiary CentreWest after being bodied by.... who?

13: The route taken by an operator passes within a mile or so of the villages of Cook Hill, North Piddle and Bredicot. Which towns does the route connect?

14: OCTOBER - The BCC Conference hears how a brother and sister burnt midnight oil while fly-posting bus shelters to sell their coaching services to the public. Which company was their brainchild?

15: NOVEMBER - DAF's bus building operation and BOVA merge to form a new company, and begin stalking other European coach and bus-building businesses. What is the name of the new DAF/BOVA company?

16: Brian Souter and Coachmart editor Alan Millar are now well-known faces in the industry. But which one holds up the Stagecoach?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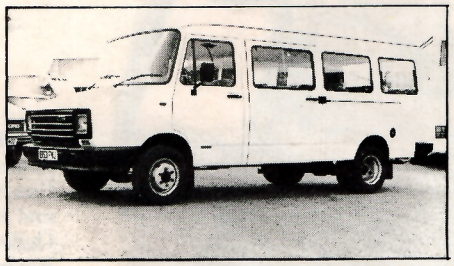

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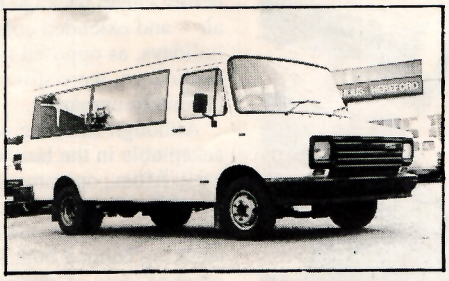

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CAUGHT IN A TIME WARP

Despite the opposition from Ena Sharples and Hilda Ogden, the Rover's Return pub trip was to a 'workers paradise'.

'Caught in a time warp', Rod Davey decides Christmas 1989 is long enough to wait to road test a Bedford OB, the oldest surviving example with Plaxton bodywork.

As I started up this mean machine on the Manchester streets I realised this would be no normal roadtest.

The petrol-powered Bedford OB with 1948 Plaxton bodywork shuddered into life, and would have brought back many fond memories were it not for the fact the vehicle was built two years before I was even thought of. But looking back at the luxuriously trimmed interior convinced me this must have been the way to travel back in Sir Stafford Cripps' austerity Britain - in the days when post war petrol rationing ensured a healthy coach market.

Passenger Comfort

With 29 coach seats including build-in headrests re-trimmed in maroon moquette augmented with leather-style piping, one could imagine everyone enjoying a day out to the seaside or a trip to the North Yorkshire Moors. However, those were the days before cheap package holidays by air - and extended coach tour holidays, as opposed to day excursions, were still very definitely upmarket.

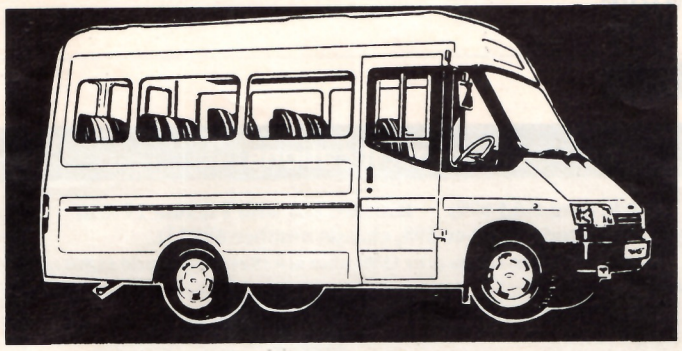
As I started up, I realised the 1948 Bedford OB/Plaxton would be no ordinary road test.

Although smoking was more acceptable in the late forties and early fifties, operators Ray and Cyril Butcher have avoided re-installing seatback ashtrays, with smoking banned both from the point of view of current trends and insurance constraints on vintage vehicles.

The maroon seats were complemented by the 'Cairo red' leatherette trims of the walls ▶

Vehicle History

1948 - Supplied new to Howards of Whitby.
1957 - Berrimans of Langtoft, Driffield.
1976 - Graham Bedford of Scarborough.
1986 - PK Historic Omnibus, Hunmanby.
1987 - Joe Sykes' scrapyard, Barnsley.
1988 - Bee-Style Coaches, Didsbury, Manchester.
(last certified April 22, 1976).



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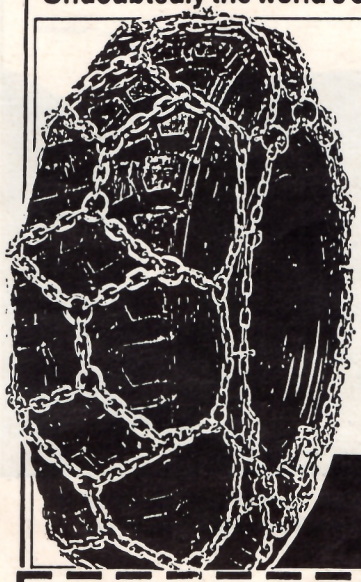

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An attempted bribe, using Coachmart's publishers' McDonalds vouchers, failed to convince the guards I was not a tool of the Western capitalist press.

▶ with the delightfully contrasting period cream Rexine leathercloth of the ceiling, including a full sliding roof and wooden panels across the width of the interior. Passengers enter the vehicle via two polished alloy steps and the saloon floor, covered with the original brown lino which is still in excellent condition.

Period charm is further emphasised by parcel racks which feature chrome-plated rack legs and veneer wood trim. All handrails and guards are covered with black plastic which could be, quite possibly, period bakelite - although if I'm wrong I am sure bus buff readers will correct me.

Apart from lighting on six pillars to each side of the gangway, there were not many other refinements to passenger comfort one would describe as 'modern'. Saloon heating was non-existent and ventilation primitive - a far cry from the modern Plaxton 3200 and 3500 coaches on the roads today.

Build

Unable to envisage the 'In the Mood' swing days, with the Glen Miller Band providing the background atmospherics, my thoughts were jogged by the possibility of dismantling the Berlin Wall - and the radical changes going on in those Eastern European countries whose political constitutions were a direct result of the postwar Yalta settlement.

Being a working class northern lad, the Granada Studio ambience began to play tricks on my sensibilities, or at least what remains of them, and I imagined a Coronation Street trip through Checkpoint Charlie to East Berlin. Of course, the air corridor was the only link West Berlin had with the Western democracies in those early days but, as this was dream time, we were there.

After being marched at gunpoint under the watchful eyes of Lenin we were lined up against the Berlin Wall. The charge - unrealistic impersonation of the Crazy Gang.

It was the annual coach trip from the Rover's Return, and the Street's academic smartie, teacher Ken Barlow, had been converted to Communism on his last CND march to Aldermaston. He had convinced the local residents, against the considerable opposition of Ena Sharples and Hilda Ogden who wanted the usual trip to Blackpool, that a look at a 'workers paradise' would be a good idea.

So there we were, outside the Rover's, when Ray and

Specifications

Vehicle (Reg.EAJ 679) Bedford OB with Plaxton 29-seat bodywork (body number 698, chassis number 68823).

Price £1,736 (incl. chassis price £508) when new (Ray Butcher paid £1,800 scrap value)

Dimensions:

Length	24'-5".
Width	7'-6".
Height	9'-0".
Wheelbase	14'-6".
Rear overhang	7'-3".
Front overhang	2'-7".

Weights:

Unladen	3ton - 18cwt.
Chassis GVW	7ton - 3cwt.

Engine:

Type Test vehicle fitted with Bedford ex-fire appliance unit (It will get you to the fire at 70mph). 6-cylinder front mounted vertical in-line petrol engine.

Capacity/Power Output 3519cc/72bhp.

Transmission

Gearbox 4-speed sliding mesh with straight tooth gears.

Clutch Mechanical 10" diameter single dry plate.

Brakes:

Type Dual circuit - tandem master cylinder separated front and rear.

Front & Rear Lockheed drums.

Power Servo-assisted hydraulic.

Parking Manual rods.

Axles:

Front Underslung beam axle.

Rear Fully floating spiral bevel drive, 11" offset from axle centre to allow for sunken gangway.

Suspension:

Front & Rear Semi-elliptical springs.

Shock absorbers 4 telescopics, one for each corner (earlier OBs did not have this facility).

Steering:

Type Manual re-circulatory ball (breaking).

Turning circle 59'-0".

General:

Warning lights High beam, oil and ignition.

Instrument panel Primitive, no temperature gauge, but fuel gauge, high beam light and speedo clock, plus button indicator to comply with regulations. Oil check through side flap.

Controls Three pedals, one steering wheel, one gear stick. Dip switch on internal bonnet cowling - opposite pull-start button.

Performance:

0-30mph 45 seconds.
0-50mph 90 seconds.
0-70mph 150 seconds.
(Lowest comfortable speed in top gear - 20mph)

Fuel Consumption 9mpg.

Vehicle Assessment

Engine/Transmission - reasonably matched, although first gear is for rolling only.
Brakes - sharp enough, slight pull to the kerb.
Steering - heavy as hell, Sylvester Stallone physique required (lacking in my case). **Totally alien environment** - no road feel whatsoever.
Roadholding - would take a nuclear bomb to change its course. Roll and pitch a little 'North Sea crossing', with manoeuvreability bloody awkward (bad turning circle of 59'-0").
Controls - certainly unconfused and very straightforward.
Pedals - Buddy Rich couldn't play this kit, although brain-busting sensitivity in clutch control would be a distinct advantage.
Gearchange - expertise at double-declutching required. First for rolling only, and judders and whines in reverse.
Handbrake - safe and positive.
Visibility - awful, with large pillars each side and one in middle of vertically split screen; 'period' mirrors (small and inadequate) cannot see sides, hard to judge width.
Noise - intrusive, although certainly lets you know when incorrect gear is engaged.
Heating - nil. Coach designed for old British Summers, when the sun always shone.
Lighting - on six pillars each side, with rear roof light.
Ventilation - definitely a strong point, with sliding roof, side windows and hinge-opening vents (air scoops) in o/s panels behind wheelarches. In fact, to 'tropical specification'.

Looking beyond the gunsights I could not fail to appreciate the Bedford/Plaxton's fetching exterior.

▶ Cyril Butcher turned up with what would have been the very latest in Bedford's and Plaxton's technology had it been a decade earlier. And as these were labour intensive days which demanded everyone had a job, the whole rig was complete with a fare-collecting conductor.

Barlow had convinced Plaxton plc to send its best representative in a bid to outbid the embryonic Ikarus for East European orders, before the current sole dealership arrangements. Tony Kingaby, with both the throwaway line and moustache, was thought to be just the man.

After an eventful pre ro-ro ferry journey, involving winching the vehicle onto the deck, we finally arrived in the American sector ready to cross Checkpoint Charlie. Unfortunately, the border guards had the feeling I was a journalistic tool of the Western capitalist press, despite protests from both the Butchers and Plaxton representative that, in their opinion, I 'was no journalist'.

But an attempted bribe, using Coachmart's publishers McDonald's vouchers, failed to win over the solid party guards. After being marched off at gunpoint under the watchful eyes of Lenin, we were lined up against the Berlin Wall.

Looking beyond the gunsights I could not fail to appreciate the Bedford/Plaxton's fetching exterior. With a wood frame construction, the Bedford had alloy side panels and, at the angle in which it was parked, I could see the original steel cowl - including the wings, bonnet, side panels and radiator grille. Undeniably a triumph of British motor engineering.

Although I could not see it from my unenviable vantage point, the vehicle's alloy rear had two hinged doors on its modest boot. In keeping with its historic period, all windows were in quarter inch plate glass and gasket glazed. The vehicle also had two sliding windows each side which opened downwards, and a split windscreen with an upper-opening window in case the wipers failed.

That this was a very dangerous situation was emphasised when Kate Adie appeared alongside me at the wall - she had been stopped for creating a potential traffic hazard by consuming two portions of meat vindaloo and ten pints of Rumanian beer after leaving the border area. But my dreams triumphed, and as the smoke cleared from the guards' Kalashnikovs, by concentrating hard on vehicle specifications as I ate Mars bars and drank Tizer given me from the kangaroo pocket of a passing bus spotter's anorak, I was able to return to reality.

Performance

In a blaze of power from the OB's 72bhp petrol engine, I reached 30mph in less than 45 seconds. And on returning from my pre-perestroika reverie, I found the vehicle returned an extremely respectable 9mpg - under urban conditions around the Granada Studio's block in Manchester.

Crawling away in first gear, my first change to second was a noisy affair as I had forgotten to double declutch - a technique I have not had to use since I upgraded my PSV licence from IA semi-automatic to all types on a Leyland PD3 with a four speed semi-synchromesh gearbox. Not that I used that box particularly brilliantly - but the examiner must have forgiven me for I passed the test.

The driver's seat was offset from centre, totally unadjustable and the pedals and controls were hard to reach. Additional problems were caused by the small and inadequate exterior mirrors as the vehicle width and shape was hard to estimate. Gaps in traffic, especially between parked and oncoming vehicles, were approached with extreme trepidation.

However, putting the vehicle into its historic context, it was probably a joy to drive when new, and it does not take too much imagination to envisage coach drivers fighting for a turn on the company's latest flagship.

As far as ride is concerned, you pays your money and takes your choice - but be prepared for a suspension system which makes even reading the large print on a popular tabloid impossible. Without wishing to be too unkind to this magnificent vintage vehicle, I advise a brief glance at the Vehicle Assessment panel for comments on steering, manoeuvrability and reversing.

Verdict

I am sure that by applying my normal criteria to this vintage vehicle I have been grossly unfair.

Despite all this, the vehicle retains its period charm and its restoration has been done in the most sympathetic and effective way by Economy Coversions of Didsbury in Manchester. ■

Acknowledgements

Coachmart extends grateful thanks to:

Ray and Cyril Butcher, of Didsbury-based Bee-Style Coaches, who lovingly restored this vehicle, which is the oldest known Plaxton still in service, to an extremely high standard inside and out. The restoration was carried out by their subsidiary company, Economy Conversions, who convert both new and used vehicles to PSV use.
Trading under the name of Nostalgic Travel, the Bedford OB/Plaxton is available together with a Burlingham Seagull for filming, publicity work, VIP visits and weddings. The firm can be contacted on 061-445 2425.
Thanks also to Granada Studio Tours, particularly to sales and marketing manager Nick Hall who made GST sets and personnel available for this Coachmart special feature.
GST is particularly interested in attracting British coach operators to its attraction, which takes the visitor around many familiar sets used on well-known television programmes.
Granada Studio Tours can be contacted on 061-832 9090.
As the test vehicle is thought to be the oldest surviving Plaxton-bodied coach still in service use, Plaxton plc expressed an interest in this 'road test'. Body and paintshop manager Tony Kingaby drew the short straw and deserves an honorary Equity card for his part in our Granada Studio frolics.

REVIEW OF THE YEAR

Editor Alan Millar looks back on the stories that hit the headlines in 1989.

JANUARY

BAA bows to Bus and Coach Council pressure and delays planned increase in charges for coaches and buses serving Heathrow and Gatwick airports.

Bidders line up to buy Metro-Cammell Weymann. Fifteen companies express interest in the Laird Group's transport systems division of rail, bus and taxi manufacturers.

Voyage National, Eastern National's French coaching subsidiary, goes into receivership after French and English bidders lose interest.

Scottish financial institutions provide £5 million new equity capital to help fund Stagecoach Holdings' expansion plans. The group is said to be 'looking actively at possible purchases' in England where it already owns three ex-National Bus subsidiaries. Interest expressed in buying Barrow Borough Transport.

Harris of Armadale, West Lothian, goes into receivership. Staff return from New Year holiday to find their employers have left the country.

Hestair sells its vehicle division - Dennis, Dennis Eagle and Duple - to Trinity Holdings, a management buy-out team led by Geoff Hollyhead, for £25.75 million. 'We intend to be the last British vehicle builder,' said Hollyhead.

Bruce of Airdrie starts London Liner service from Central Scotland to London in competition with Scottish Citylink and Stagecoach.

Management and employees buy Grampian Regional Transport for £5 million.

Appeal Court rules that coach operators are responsible for paying VAT generated by holiday brochures which carry their name.

Chancellor Nigel Lawson plants maple tree to mark the start of work on Volvo Parts' £16.3 million bus parts centre at Lutterworth.

FEBRUARY

Drawlane buys Crosville Motor Services from ATL Western, making Drawlane the biggest UK independent with 1,600 vehicles and 4,000 staff.

Hull-based Good News Travel threatens to take legal action against Kingston on Hull City Transport after KHCT competes against it.

Smiths Shearings invests over £2 million in 66 Leyland Tiger coaches and buses.

First Optare Delta-bodied DAF SB220 goes into service with Northern Bus in South Yorkshire.

International Leisure Group invests £3.2 million in relaunching NAT Coaches as Coach Europe with a fleet of 16 Neoplans. Contracted coaches will also be used for what starts as an airline-style service for ILG and third party tour companies. After 1992, it could become a scheduled international operator. 'We intend to change the face of coach travel,' says ILG chairman Harry Goodman.

Davie's of Rye goes into liquidation with losses totalling £455,000. A National Express contract to carry Hoverspeed passengers is partly to blame, but a car dealership and high leasing commitments on new coaches also had a major part to play.

Drawlane announces closure of Shamrock and Rambler after it fails to renegotiate a National Express contract on a viable basis. National Express sets up a 51 per cent-owned replacement company, Dorset Travel Services.

MAN re-enters UK coach market with Jonckheere-bodied 16-290 chassis, selling at £107,000.

Kassbohrer opens new UK headquarters in Lincoln and shows left-hand-drive version of Transcontinental HDH model to gauge UK interest. 'If we can get five sales for it, we will go ahead,' says MD Jim Shuttleworth.

MARCH

Metropolitan Police and Westminster Council try to drive illegally parked coaches off the streets. London Zoo, meanwhile, ups its coach parking charges by 166 per cent, from £6 to £16.

Stuart Johnson opens £1.2 million Scania dealership at Worksop. Scania hints that some buses and coaches might be built in Britain one day.

Badgerline told not to compete against operators running tendered services in place of its own commercial routes. This is part of Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on Badgerline's acquisition of Midland Red West Holdings.

Management pay £1 million to buy Silver Coach Lines of Edinburgh from Walter Alexander group. Entire fleet is replaced with leased Setras and Caetano Optimos.

Chancellor Nigel Lawson slaps PSV vehicle excise duty rates up by over 400 per cent in streamlining exercise designed to make buses and coaches pay their true track costs. BCC says it is 'horrendous and inflationary'.

LAG starts selling Cummins-engined versions of the Panoramic integral at £2,500 price premium.

National Expressliner - standard specification National Express Volvo B10M with Plaxton Paramount 3500 body - launched by Transport Minister Michael Portillo. Most controversial feature is the compulsion on ▶

Caetano: new UK headquarters.

▶ contracting operators to lease them from a company owned jointly by Plaxton and National Express.

Berkhof appoints Q-Drive's Alder Valley Engineering as its UK dealer. A full range of coaches will be available for the 1990 season.

Plaxton announces £4.75 million pre-tax profits for 1988 and pledges to go on investing to beat European competition.

Harry Blundred launches Docklands Transit minibus operation in London and makes immediate call for deregulation in the capital.

National Welsh buys Inter Valley Link from Rhymney Valley council.

APRIL

National Express launches London Express network of feeder routes to the capital.

Plaxton reveals that it is discussing buying the Metrobus body design from MCW.

Caetano imports 35-seat Algarve midicoach based on MAN 10.180 chassis and officially opens new UK headquarters at Heather, Leicestershire.

Capital Coaches Setra wins Blackpool Rally, Bests of London LAG wins at first-ever Southampton Rally.

Stagecoach buys East Midland Motor Services and Ribble Motor Services from management teams.

Wadham Stringer launches Winchester midicoach on Leyland Swift chassis.

MAY

VL Bus and Coach holds special conferences to stress that the Leyland Tiger is still available and will remain so indefinitely.

Warwickshire-based Vanguard Coaches complains that Western Travel's Midland Red South is trying to cream off its commercial routes.

OK Travel opens £300,000 new depot in Peterlee, Co Durham.

Plaxton and Mercedes-Benz announce plans to sell Mercedes O.303s bodied at Scarborough.

Management and employees buy Busways Travel Service from Tyne and Wear PTA for £14 million.

Trent agrees to pay £2.05 million for Barton Transport.

Kingston upon Hull City Transport restarts Voyage National by buying customer list and some assets from Eastern National.

Coach Tourism Council: launched in June.

Government announces £12 billion plans for new roads to see Britain into the next century.

Material Trading buys City Vehicle Engineering, builder of Omni midibus.

MCW issues 126 protective redundancy notices to its remaining employees.

JUNE

Plaxton pays nearly £48 million to buy Henly motor group from ADT. This deal doubles group turnover and adds the Mellor Coachcraft minibus business to the group.

Laird sells Metro-Cammell rail business to GEC-Alsthom for £44.5 million and taxi business to Reliant for £4 million. Metrorider midibus is expected to go to Optare; Metrobus body still looks destined for Plaxton.

OFT agrees to investigate Good News Travels complaints against KHCT.

Robbie Hood quits Robin Hood Vehicle Builders to form LHE, a new minibus builder. Kinnersley Investments renames RHVB as Phoenix International.

Duple announces plans for longer Dennis Dart and for Dart-style body on Scania N113 bus.

Coach Tourism Council launched to raise public awareness of coach travel.

Stagecoach steps up competition in Perth, its home city.

Stagecoach sells Frontrunner South East (part of East Midland) to Ensign Bus.

Brighton Coaches acquires Campings Luxury Coaches.

JULY

Michael Portillo says London deregulation will not occur until 1991 or 1992.

Employees and management pay over £3 million for Derby City Transport buses and coaches.

Duple announces its withdrawal from the market. 300 and 425 coaches and parts and services business go to Plaxton in £4 million cash sale. 'Recent developments in the industry left us with no alternative,' says chief executive Richard Owen. Dart body will stay meantime with Duple, but Scania project is dead.

As well as announcing end of Duple, Trinity reveals £10 million plan for new Dennis factory in Guildford.

Plaxton admits that plans to buy Metrobus body from MCW have run into trouble. Dispute surrounds delivery of final buses for West Midlands Travel.

Volvo confirms that Leyland will start building B10M coaches at Workington from April 1990.

Scania changes selling arrangements. Stuart Johnson will take over direct sales to English, Welsh, Ulster and Isle of Man fleet customers. Reliable Vehicles takes over all sales responsibility in Scotland.

Duple: end of an era.

Smiths Shearings buys Archway Motor Coaches in Shropshire.

Optare buys Metrorider midibus from MCW and says it will focus the product on the bus market.

ATL Holdings sells its remaining operations - SUT, Yelloway Trathen, Neoplan dealer Carlton PSV and travel shops - to National Express.

AJS Holdings sells West Yorkshire Road Car to Yorkshire Rider.

Government proposes compulsory seatbelts for coaches and minibuses.

AUGUST

National Express buys Stagecoach's Anglo-Scottish coach services and turns them into Caledonian Express. Scottish Citylink severs its connections with National and announces bold plans to turn itself into a ▶

▶ national and international operator. Wallace Arnold sells its stake in Euroways to National Express.

Government proposes scrapping operator licensing for vehicles with under nine seats

Stagecoach buys Southdown from management team and buys out Eastbourne interest in Topline, Hastings.

VL plans to have 17 service and repair centres operating by the end of 1990.

SEPTEMBER

Carlton PSV to sell at least 12 Neoplan SLII citybuses to UK operators.

Plaxton is one of three bidders for Duple's Dart body.

Western Travel buys Vanguard Coaches and plans to keep it separate from Midland Red South.

Drawlane buys majority shareholding in Midland Fox, consolidating its interests in the Midlands.

Scottish Citylink starts to pick up contractors for its competitive coach services, starting with Rapsons of Alness which makes an 11th hour decision not to link up with National Express.

OFT criticises predatory behaviour by Highland Scottish in its battles with newcomer Inverness Traction.

Sunseeker Holidays collapses, leaving 700 coach holiday tourists stranded in Spain and Yugoslavia. 'I have lost everything,' says MD Colin Johnson.

OCTOBER

Duple sells Dart body to Carlyle Group which will take over production in 1990.

Drawlane buys 260 vehicles and 60 Greater Manchester routes from Stagecoach's Ribble and East Midland companies in rationalisation deal. Southdown buys out Cedar Travel's routes in Worthing. Midland Fox buys out Kinch bus routes in Loughborough.

Plaxton announces half-year profits up to £3.7 million.

MAN tests demand for 360hp alternative to 16.290.

Laird finally sells Metrobus - to DAF, which will build the chassis in the Netherlands from 1991, and Optare, which will build a restyled version of the body.

Wrights of Ballymena wins orders for 106 bodies on Renault S75 midibuses for two London Buses units.

Coach and Bus 89 at NEC. LAG launches £120,000 Eos integral on UK market, Kassbohrer announces plans for Spanish and MAN-engined Setras for UK in 1990, Plaxton shows French-built Iveco 315 for UK market, Van Hool shows A600 bus and Optare shows its first Leeds-built Metrorider.

Walter Alexander group goes up for sale. Plaxton thought to be interested in buying Falkirk and Ulster coachbuilding businesses if they are sold separately.

Glenton International goes into liquidation, less than a year after selling its coach fleet and contracting the operation to Tellings Golden Miller.

Summerfield Coaches, Southampton becomes Coachmart Operator of the Year.

Stagecoach buys Portsmouth Citybus from Southampton Citybus.

NOVEMBER

Scottish Citylink faces new competition on its home ground. Silver Coach Lines and Greens of Kirkintilloch launch cut-price luxury service between Edinburgh and Glasgow.

Thirtieth anniversary of the M1 is marked by commemorative Birmingham-London run by Midland Red CM5 and National Expressliner coaches.

Bakers of Weston super Mare celebrates its centenary in the travel business.

Restructured Sunseeker Holidays is back in business with ex-MD Johnson acting as advisor.

Arlington sells stock and goodwill at its London dealership to Plaxton.

Trimdon Motor Services sells Tyne and Wear Omnibus Company to Go-Ahead Northern which promptly sells it on to Busways.

DAF Bus and Bova merge into United Bus, a largely DAF-owned business which says it is in the market for further acquisitions.

Western Travel buys G&G Coaches of Leamington in a further acquisition of a competitor.

Stevenson's of Uttoxeter buys Bagnall's Coaches; Paramount Leisure buys Linkline of West London.

BAA agrees phased introduction of new coach charging structure for Heathrow and Gatwick airports.

DECEMBER

Berkhof announces its first orders for the 1990 season - five Scanias for Appleby's of Louth.

Plaxton restructures sales operation to bring in Continental-style direct selling. Kirkby dealership is renamed Plaxton. It confirms that it will probably build up to 40 Duple 320 bodies in mid-1990, but the Duple 340 design looks dead; the Integral 425's future is still unclear, but Plaxton has plenty of Duple and Van Hool integrals to sell.

Moor-Dale and R&M sell out to Northumbria Buses.

Reeve Burgess, Wadham Stringer and Wright will join Carlyle in bodying Dennis Darts. ■

Thirty years of the M1.

Passing judgement on lorry drivers

SIR

I have for sometime been an ardent reader of 'Marksman', and on almost every point he has raised in his articles in 'Coachmart' I have been in agreement, but in this week's issue I must take exception to some of his remarks regarding lorry drivers.

It is true that a great number of lorry drivers definitely exceed the speed limit and act like 'Kings of the Road', arrogantly passing everybody who comes in their way, but on the other hand I am often filled with admiration for the skilful driving of these men in the trade who drive their huge articulated lorries, manipulating them into limited spaces and on and off ferries without the slightest error. Real professionals!

Perhaps I had better explain that I am a dedicated coach hirer's wife who looks after the clerical side of the business, and several weeks ago my husband and I travelled by car on a dual carriageway where there were roadworks. Behind us, two lorries took up the position of driving side by side, thus ensuring that no vehicles could overtake, and everyone was, therefore, obliged to keep in line. They very successfully 'policed' the traffic for 2 or 3 miles, and I was filled with admiration.

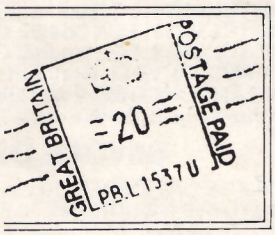
There had, of course, to be one smart guy who came up the hard shoulder passing everyone. 'This will be a signal for everyone else to do the same', said my husband, and sure enough, next minute another broke the queue and started up behind us on the hard shoulder. My husband edged out, although still making sure he kept his place in the queue, and succeeded in thwarting the driver's attempt to pass. He was forced to rejoin the queue and no other car attempted to pass afterwards.

When we eventually reached the point where another main road converged with the one on which we were travelling, sheer mayhem took place as all the smart alecs tried to overtake. I can still see the fear on a young fellow's face as he sat in the middle of the junction with three elderly lady passengers and the traffic swirling around him, attempting to break back into the line of traffic while everyone closed ranks.

Regarding the observation that a doctor could be obstructed, I would say that a doctor is more likely to be needed if the traffic is allowed to perform at will, considering the number of madmen driving private cars. On the other hand, emergency services would be identified by flashing blue lights and sirens blaring.

As Marksman does not identify himself, I hope he will excuse me if I also refrain from doing so.

Coach Hirer's Wife



Send your letters to: The Editor, Coachmart, EMAP Response Publishing Ltd, Wentworth House, Wentworth Street, Peterborough PE1 1DS

Unfair to queue-jumpers

SIR

Unlike Marksman (Coachmart 7 December) I am most grateful to those lorry drivers who drive side by side on the approach to roadworks. They are not preventing overtaking, ie. passing a vehicle which is naturally proceeding more slowly, but queue jumping by those who ignore 'no overtaking' signs or the clear indications that traffic ahead is restricted by roadworks.

Marksman may rest assured that the inconvenience to the small number wishing to leave at a junction before the roadworks is caused by the frustration of the lorry drivers at being delayed by queue jumpers, not by any desire on their part to cause obstruction to the few who might legitimately pass in these circumstances.

Raymond Taylor
Almeida PSV Services

Nostalgia Corner

IT was 1968 when Ribble subsidiary W C Standerwick & Co Ltd introduced its prototype Bristol VRL/ECW 60 seat double deck coach at the Earls Court motor show. A further 29 vehicles were ordered after a short period of evaluation against Standerwick's existing 37 Leyland Atlantean 'Gay Hostess' coaches.

The low-height 36 foot (11 metre) VRL has much in common with the present generation of double deck coaches. Specification included: power steering, five speed semi-auto gearbox, centre plug doors, reclining seats, toilet, full height rear luggage compartment, Webasto heating, and top deck forced air ventilation. Unlike the Atlanteans they replaced no servery was provided, because hostess provision was considered uneconomic.

Standerwick operated the VRLs on London express services out of Burnley and Blackpool depots. These routes subsequently became part of the National Express network. A combination of circumstances led to a short operational life. The chassis was unique in the UK and not subjected to adequate development work. Some detail modifications distinguished the prototype from the rest of the fleet, but reliability was always a problem. A serious accident on the M1 resulted in the sort of publicity that the industry has now come to expect, precipitating a decision by the National Bus Company in the late '70s to replace them with 12 metre single deck coaches of near similar capacity.

The vertical 0.680 Leyland engine was mounted longitudinally behind the rear off-side wheel.

Photographed in London's Victoria coach station in 1972 this VRL in National white livery looks much less impressive than when it was painted in its original cream and maroon.

Following disposal by the NBC the VRLs were snapped up by a number of independent operators, mainly for incoming tourist work. However, by 1981 most had either been exported or scrapped. Tyne and Wear PTE used six on a Newcastle docks transfer service until 1982, and it is possible that some of these may still survive.

Quiz answers from page 16

1: West Midlands Travel
2: The church
3: West Midlands Travel(again)
4: Walter Alexander
5: Javaward/Best Tours
6: He is playing Monopoly
7: Viscount
8: Henlys Vehicle Group
9: Fagin coaxes wretches, and the operator wrecks his coaches!
10: Duple
11: Scottish Citylink and National Express
12: Robert Wright of Ballymena
13: Alcester and Worcester
14: Stagecoach
15: United Bus BV
16: Pic A is Brian Souter.

Ensignbus

DOUBLE DECK BUSES

1969-70 BRISTOL VRT1. ECW bodies, Gardner engines, current test certificates.
1971-74 BRISTOL VRT2. ECW bodies, Gardner engines, current test certificates.
1974-80 BRISTOL VRT3. ECW bodies, Gardner engines, current test certificates.
1975-77 BRISTOL VRT3. Northern Counties, 2 door, no test certificates.
1972-75 LEYLAND ATLANTEAN AN68. East Lancs and Park Royal bodies, current test certificates.
1985 SCANIA K112TR. Berkhof Eclipse, double deck, 73 seats, 12 months certificate, fully automatic, gearbox.

SINGLE DECK BUSES

1974-77 LEYLAND NATIONALS. 10.3m bus or coach, 4/90 – 6/90 test certificates.
1975 LEYLAND NATIONALS. 10.3m, 2 door with 6/90 test certificates.

USED COACHES

LEYLAND LEOPARD Duple, 53 seats, power door.

1980 DAF DKTL Plaxton Supreme, 53 seats, new certificate.

1982 'X' reg BEDFORD YNT Plaxton Supreme V, 53 seats, 4/90 Test Certificate.
1981 'W' reg BEDFORD YNT Duple, 46 reclining seats and spare set of 49 fixed seats, current test certificate.
1982 LEYLAND TIGER Duple Goldliner, 46 seats, d/glazing, toilet on saloon floor, current test certificate. Choice of two.

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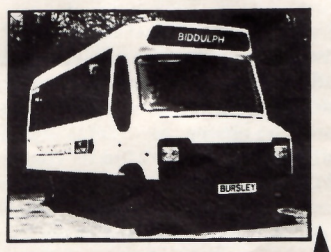

For further information and test drive contact Gerald Halstead.

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Disqualification of Clayton Jones is frozen

Michael Jewell reports on the disciplinary inquiry at which South Wales operator Clayton Jones lost his firms' operators licences ... a decision which was subsequently put on ice by the High Court.

The four bus firms run by Mr Clayton Jones have had their PSV operators licences revoked, with immediate effect, and Mr Clayton Jones and his wife have been disqualified from holding or obtaining a licence for a period of two years, by the South Wales Deputy Traffic Commissioner Mr Gerrard Sullivan. The Commissioner refused a stay pending an appeal to the Transport Tribunal.

The four firms, Shamrock Private Hire Services (Newport) Ltd; C F & I E Jones, trading as Clayton Jones Coach Tours, of Pontypridd; Celtic Connection Ltd, of Pontypridd; and Rhondda Travel Ltd, trading as Rhondda Buses, of Ynysybwl, Pontypridd; had been called to a Cardiff disciplinary inquiry.

Department of Transport vehicle examiners gave evidence of the imposition of 17 immediate and nine delayed prohibitions, four of which were subsequently varied when additional defects were found.

Vehicle examiner Mr Donald Sedgemond said that he had imposed a delayed prohibition expiring at midnight on a Shamrock vehicle he had checked entering Kwiksave at Aberdare in April 1988. There were four defects. The entrance doors were faulty, the handbrake was at the end of its travel but just holding, the power steering ram was leaking and the power steering pipes were chafing.

Vehicle examiner Mr Robert Taylor gave evidence about six of the prohibition notices, including an immediate prohibition he had imposed on a Celtic Connection vehicle because the emergency door had been locked and could not be opened from the outside. In April he imposed an immediate prohibition on a Shamrock vehicle which had an excessive fuel leak spreading over the whole of the engine area and a loose engine hatch.

Vehicle examiner Mr Steve Cooke said that when that vehicle was presented for clearance defect one was still present. He issued a variation notice for nine additional defects. The same vehicle was presented for clearance a fortnight later and a further prohibition was issued for four defects.

He imposed delayed prohibitions on two Rhondda Travel vehicles during a fleet inspection in January. Both prohibitions were subsequently varied after additional defects were discovered when the vehicles were presented for clearance. He imposed immediate prohibitions on two Rhondda Travel vehicles during a fleet check in June. He imposed a delayed prohibition on a Clayton Jones vehicle in a spot check at Rhondda Bus Station in May because the emergency hammer for breaking the glass was missing. In February he imposed an immediate prohibition on a Clayton Jones vehicle presented for annual test because the steering box was insecure to the chassis. A Celtic Connection vehicle given an immediate prohibition during a fleet inspection had been inspected by the company eight days prior to his examination.

Questioned by Mr Gareth Jones, for the Group, Mr Cooke said that a lot of the matters picked up related to brakes. He agreed that the use of a rolling road brake tester would make it a lot easier to pick up such defects, but said that he had picked them up without using a rolling road.

Vehicle examiner Mr Robert Hardisty said that he had imposed an immediate prohibition for brake defects on a Shamrock vehicle presented for annual test.

Vehicle examiner Mr Graham Ballard said that he had visited Shamrock's premises to carry out a maintenance investigation in October. He issued one immediate prohibition for three defects. He had reservations about both the vehicle condition and the maintenance arrangements, having issued a defect notice to a newly inspected vehicle. The facilities consisted of an outside ramp. Maintenance revolved around one man, a Mr King, who was based in the company's office, some miles away from the yard.

Problems over brake defects on Dennis vehicles had eventually been sorted out. However, the defects had constantly been reported by drivers with no effective action having been taken quickly enough.

Questioned by Mr Gareth Jones, Mr Ballard said that he had inspected five vehicles. Two had been totally free of defects and another had been given a defect notice for seven items. He was aware that one of the defective vehicles had passed its annual test on September 20th. He was aware of a general problem over brakes with Dennis buses and he agreed that a lot of Dennis buses had had to have modifications carried out.

Vehicle examiner Mr Ronald Pool said that on September 27th he had inspected a DAF coach belonging to Shamrock at the request of the police. He imposed an immediate prohibition for three brake defects.

Mr Clayton Jones said Shamrock currently had 15 vehicles, the two oldest of which were to be sold in the next day or so and replaced with brand new vehicles. Three of the vehicles prohibited had been scrapped. He had had control of Shamrock since 1985 and that company's buses

licensing & legal

WEEKLY REPORT ON LAW AND THE COACH OPERATOR

By Michael Jewell

covered in the region of 750,000 miles a year. It had a turnover of about £500,000 per annum. When he took over the company all the vehicles were old, the youngest being six years old. Four of those vehicles had now been disposed of and the fleet was now more modern on average. He wanted a more modern fleet, as it attracted less attention and they needed to market their services to the public in a more efficient manner.

They had obtained the yard at the Stephenson Street Industrial Estate, Newport, 12 to 18 months ago on a long term 99 year lease from Newport Borough Council at a peppercorn rent. All aspects of maintenance were dealt with at Stephenson Street. Until recently, the person solely responsible was Mr King, who had been involved with public service vehicles for over 20 years. He had a supervisory role over the office staff but his main responsibility was maintenance and the checking of tachograph records. The vehicles were inspected every four weeks irrespective of ▶

mileage. They had followed the Traffic Commissioner's advice and implemented a drivers' daily nil defect reporting system. Spot checks were carried out on vehicles and disciplinary action was taken against drivers who did not report defects.

Problems had arisen with brand new Dennis buses purchased earlier this year, said Mr Clayton Jones. He was told by Mr King that they were not getting any satisfaction from the Dennis agents in Cardiff. However, they had a meeting with Dennis representatives and the matter was put right. All the required parts were sent through to Cardiff and the vehicles were modified.

Mr Clayton Jones said that the proceedings arose out of a very serious accident that occurred in Rhondda in September, involving a vehicle driven by a Mr John Thorne. The vehicle examiner found various brake defects. He arranged for the Freight Transport Association to carry out an independent inspection of the vehicle concerned and their report was identical to the vehicle examiner's. Mr Thorne had driven that vehicle for the three days previous to the accident and on each of those days he had put in a nil defect report. When Mr Thorne was asked about what had happened, he had said that there had been nothing wrong with the vehicle and the brakes suddenly failed. He suspended Mr Thorne at that stage while an investigation was carried out.

The day after another driver reported having seen Mr Thorne placing a large brick under the rear wheel of the coach the previous day at Kwiksave. He was also subsequently told that the General and Municipal Workers Union at Porth were going round looking for witnesses of an incident about a mile from where the accident took place when Mr Thorne was alleged to have said to passengers that he was sorry he could not help them with their luggage as he had no brakes. When Mr Thorne was again interviewed, he initially denied that there had been anything wrong with the brakes. He subsequently admitted that at Kwiksave he had noticed that the handbrake was not working but he had thought that he would leave it until he got back. It was pointed out to him that was totally against instructions. Mr Thorne was now working for another company.

Mr Clayton Jones said that the prohibitions related mainly to the older vehicles in the fleet. Vehicles were picking up prohibitions even though their drivers were not noticing anything wrong the previous day. That was why they had scrapped the three vehicles concerned.

For the future, he was adding his name as a nominated transport manager to the Shamrock licence and the intention was that he would visit that company's yard at least once a week. He had been concerned by the number of brake defects found. Consequently, steps had been taken to purchase a rolling road. They had purchased the former premises of Jones Motors at Ynysybwl and they were constructing purpose built garage premises on the site in which the rolling road would be installed. Those facilities would be used by all the firms in the Group.

A contract had been entered into with the FTA, giving them sweeping powers to stop and inspect vehicles at any time, and visit the Group's premises and check the system at any time. It was expensive but necessary. The FTA would operate very much in the way of DoT vehicle examiners and they would report direct to him. He had brought them in on a previous occasion for a similar exercise and he had found them to be very good.

Unfortunately, with the greatest will in the world, vehicles would become defective while in use, said Mr Clayton Jones. They had had one instance 12 months ago where a vehicle left the test station, having passed its annual test, and on arrival at Cardiff Bus Station it was given a prohibition.

As far as seats were concerned, they had a consistent problem when carrying schoolchildren who played about with the seats, and the matter had been taken up with the local Education Authority. They had also had to put chains on the emergency hammers, which did not prevent their use, but which stopped them getting pinched.

Celtic Connection had been trading since March 1988. It now had six vehicles which covered 140,000 miles a year. Turnover was in the region of £100,000. He had always been transport manager of that company.

Rhondda Travel was operating eight vehicles covering 500,000 miles a year. That company had been trading for 18 months and the turnover was some £300,000. Mr King had previously been the sole transport manager. However, said Mr Clayton Jones, he was now adding himself.

Clayton Jones Coach Tours had 12 vehicles covering some 600,000 miles a year. It had been in operation since 1980. Mr King was the transport manager but he was now being added as a second transport manager, said Mr Clayton Jones.

Even before he was aware of the public inquiry, they had introduced a system where, when a driver indicated there were no defects and defects were subsequently picked up by the fitters, the fitters had to report to him in writing.

Mr Clayton Jones said that in the summer of this year he had an involvement with Merthyr Tydfil Transport. That company had 53 vehicles. It required 40 vehicles at peaks, but they were never able to obtain 40 vehicles because there were considerable defects on the vehicles. He had spent a lot of money having the vehicles checked by the FTA. That involvement had now ceased and the company was now in the hands of an administrative receiver.

He would do his utmost to ensure there was no neglect on the part of the various companies and their employees. There were bound to be defects from time to time through the very nature of the operation. However, neglect was not acceptable and never would be. They had increased the fitting staff following the acquisition of Jones Motors and they were investing heavily in infrastructure. This was the first disciplinary inquiry any of the companies had been called to under their current licences.

Mr Sullivan referred to the judgement of the Transport Tribunal on appeal from a decision of a previous Traffic Commissioner when Clayton Jones Coach Tours had appeared before him in respect of a previous licence, saying that the Tribunal had directed that it was the duty of a Traffic Commissioner to take the whole of the previous conduct into account.

Mr Clayton Jones said that there had been no neglect by Clayton Jones Coach Tours since that time.

In reply to Mr Sullivan, Mr Clayton Jones agreed that in 1987 the Traffic Commissioner had said that any further prohibition notices could put the licence at risk of revocation. He said that they had put the system recommended by the Commissioner into operation. Asked why he had not supplied the Commissioner with details of the vehicles owned by his firms, he said that he had been working on the Transport Tribunal's comments that it was not necessary to do so. They had since done so, though he agreed there had been a two year gap.

Mr Sullivan pointed out that operators were required to provide such information, under Section 20(3) of the 1981 Act, if requested by the Commissioner.

Mr Clayton Jones said that he could not condone that certain members of staff had not carried out their jobs properly. He had taken immediate steps to rectify the glaring points raised in the vehicle examiners' reports.

Mr Gareth Jones said it had to be conceded there had been numerous prohibitions over a period of time, but they should be taken in context. Some were due to neglect, but others were inevitable when vehicles travelled on the road. Of 12 prohibitions imposed on Shamrock vehicles, two were in respect of neglect. Seven of those prohibitions were brake related in whole or in part. The rolling road would deal with those difficulties. Ten of the prohibitions involved three very old vehicles which had now been scrapped. The company had a policy of continually upgrading its fleet and Mr Clayton Jones was now taking a more active role as second transport manager.

Of seven prohibitions imposed on Rhondda Travel vehicles, two were attributed by the vehicle examiners to neglect and three were brake related in whole or in part. Clayton Jones Coach Tour vehicles attracted six prohibitions, none indicating

Eurocoach drop bid

Eurocoach PLC have dropped their bid for a new PSV operator's licence authorising the operation of 16 vehicles from a base at 19A Nursery Road, Thornton Heath, Croydon, Surrey.

The company, the directors of which are Ms Sarah Thompson, Mr Malcolm Bartlett and Mr Bruce Tonks, had applied for a standard international licence with Mr Tonks as the nominated professionally competent transport manager.

The Metropolitan Traffic Commissioner, Air Vice Marshal Ronald Ashford, had given notice that he intended considering the application at a public inquiry in London in December. However, shortly before the inquiry was to take place the company withdrew its application, informing the Commissioner that they now proposed to concentrate their business activities in other areas which did not involve the operation of public services vehicles.

▶ neglect. Three were brake related in whole or in part. That firm's record was not as bad as it first appeared. There were two prohibitions imposed on Celtic Connection vehicles, neither being attributed to neglect as far as the vehicle examiners were concerned. Again, that was not a bad record. That company, of which Mr Clayton Jones had always been the transport manager, had attracted the least number of prohibitions.

Mr Clayton Jones should be given the opportunity of demonstrating that the procedures now instituted, and the assurances given, were carried through.

Mr Sullivan said that he had had regard to the previous history of Mr Clayton Jones as an operator. There had been a previous public inquiry relating to Clayton Jones Coach Tours and an appeal to the Transport Tribunal. He had to consider the situation in the context of the admitted prohibition notices, the past conduct and the affect the failure to maintain vehicles properly had on other road users. He felt duty bound to exercise his powers to revoke forthwith the licences held by all four firms, and to disqualify Mr Clayton Jones and Mrs Jones from holding or obtaining a licence for two years. He was satisfied that the four firms had made statements of intention when they applied for their licences that had not been fulfilled, which had resulted in a failure to maintain vehicles that had been a danger to the public.

Refusing a request for a stay pending an appeal, Mr Sullivan said that as he had found that there was an element of danger to the public he could not grant a stay.

*** Mr Clayton Jones has since obtained a High Court injunction allowing him to keep his 41-vehicle fleet on the road until a Traffic Tribunal is convened to reconsider the case.** ■

Limited renewal with warning

THE North Eastern Traffic Commissioner Mr Frederick Whalley has renewed the licence held by Aidobourne Ltd, trading as Atkinsons Coaches, for six vehicles for a period of six months only, with a warning in regard to the company's future maintenance standards.

The company, of South Burns, Chester le Street, Durham, appeared before the Commissioner at a Newcastle upon Tyne public inquiry.

Licence cut

THE authorisation on the PSV operators licence held by Kent operators E & R Newton, trading as Melrose Coaches, has been reduced from seven to five vehicles, by the South Eastern Traffic Commissioner Brigadier Michael Turner. In addition, the Commissioner has cut the duration of the licence so that it now expires at the end of May 1990.

The firm, of Woodgrange, Stone Cross, Bilsington, Ashford, appeared before the Commissioner at disciplinary proceedings in Faversham because of concern over the maintenance of its vehicles.

Commissioner requires further financial evidence

CONSIDERATION of disciplinary action against the PSV operators licence held by Mr Raymond Collishaw, trading as Collishaws Coaches, of West Auckland, together with an application to renew the licence, has been adjourned for one month, by the North Eastern Traffic Commissioner Mr Frederick Whalley, for the production of additional financial information.

Mr Collishaw, of 65 Ullswater Avenue, West Auckland, appeared at a Newcastle upon Tyne public inquiry. The Commissioner indicated that the financial evidence would be considered in private, before he announced his decision.

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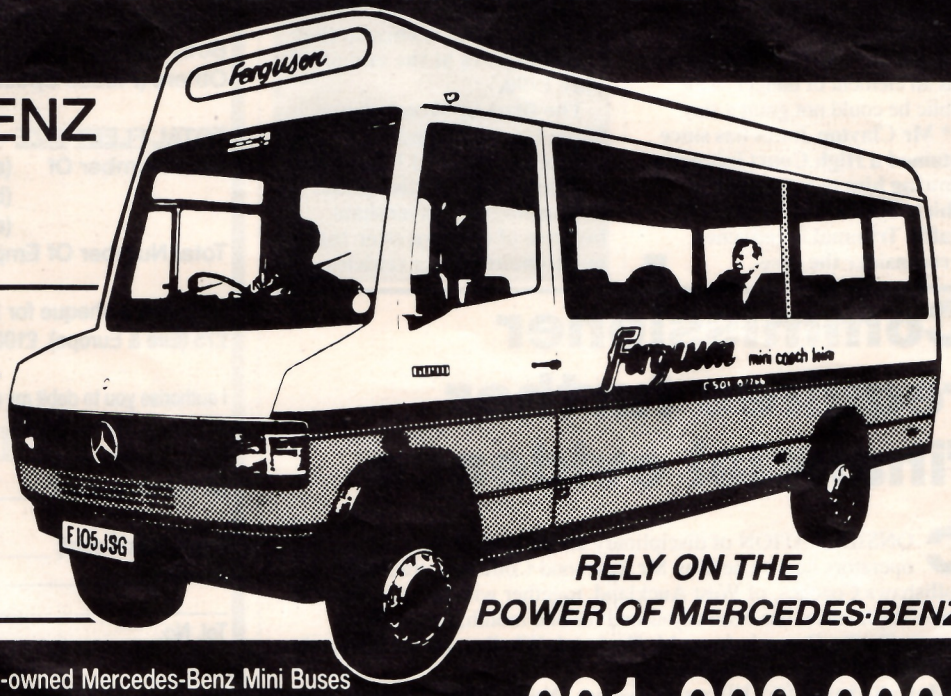

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A TALL ORDER FOR ARTHUR GILES ...

THE public weren't Arthur Giles' favourite topic. No matter what the problem, they expected their coach on time, and for next to nothing.

Christmas parties may have provided much-needed work at an otherwise quiet period, but for sheer hassle they took the biscuit. Ferrying drunks around in the freezing cold was not Arthur's idea of fun, particularly when it was Arthur who had to mop down the coach floor the following morning due to the inevitable 'accident' from an over-indulgent passenger.

For him, the executive 77-seater he'd bought last spring - his only coach - was built to cruise the dusty roads of Southern France, its smart saloon filled with attentive tourists and the unmistakable aroma of sun-tan oil. The black and grey coach gleamed in the sun like no other he'd owned and gave him a deep sense of pride when he parked it alongside almost any other vehicle.

A winter evening did neither the coach nor Arthur any favours. The passengers would board it without seeing its smart livery, would not want the use of its fridge and hot drink machine, and would block the toilet. The air conditioning would be redundant and the heater would work overtime.

Inevitably, the 'phone rang one cold December day and it was another beano organiser in a panic.

'Could I book a coach for a Christmas party?', asked the voice. 'We need a big one, though, and it mustn't be tatty.'

If there was one way to get up Arthur's nose, it was to accuse him of running tatty vehicles: 'I've got one coach, it is big, and there isn't a finer vehicle east of the Pennines, sir. What date do you need it?'

'How much is it, first,' chimed the thin voice, and Arthur knew by its reedy quality that the owner was a southern jessy...a real wimp. He hated that sort, but business is business.

'That really depends on the date and the length of hire, sir. I can promise you we'll do our best with price, but these executive coaches are expensive to buy and run.'

'Well, we want to do a cross channel trip on December 22. How much will that cost?'

Arthur's eyes widened, and he corrected his normal slouch to sit bolt upright: 'Crossing the channel on December 22?' he repeated. 'You won't get back until Christmas Eve. Are you sure that's when you are travelling?'

'I'm afraid so. No choice, I'm sorry to say. You know what it's like around Christmas...'

Arthur did, indeed, know what it was like around Christmas. The Festive Season was possibly his most stressful time. Quite apart from the pressure exerted upon him by the fatherhood of four children - three of them being whingeing girls - there was the wife. Sue was five feet one of sheer venom...a woman not to be tangled with on a bad day. On a good day, ten feet was a safe distance.

Sue would not be happy to have Arthur out on the road so close to Christmas. The family unit was not to be taken lightly, and Arthur would have to have the best possible reason for absence. That was the irritating thing with Sue - she was too damn reasonable. Arthur would, he knew, be allowed to state his case but Sue would be able to shoot him down in flames. And that's precisely why Sue was the driving force behind the hotel bookings, ferry bookings, and every aspect of AG Travel apart from the actual vehicle. In 20 years, she had not made a serious mistake.

Arthur decided to demand a premium commensurate with the ear-bending he could expect when the news got to Sue. Short of showering her with diamonds, the quickest route to Sue's better nature was through the bank account.

'I'll have to charge extra for that, sir. I'll have to pay the driver extra time for a start,' he said, lying easily.

The squeaky voice confirmed the booking and made no attempt to haggle over the price. Relieved, Arthur thanked him for the custom.

'You'll forgive me asking, but what's the trip for...a party?'

'Not exactly. It's just a business trip, but our usual transport has let us down. My boss is, though, quite a fan of coach travel.'

'What name is the booking under,' asked Harry, licking his pencil in time-honoured tradition.

'Nicholas.'

'Mr Nicholas?'

'No. St Nicholas. Has the coach got a lot of luggage space....?'

Living museum

WITHIN seven miles of this year's Gateshead National Garden Festival, the Beamish Museum may well be worth a spot on the itinerary of any excursion to the area.

Beamish offers a variety of 'living' exhibits, including traditional cheesemaking, and a colliery village with restored pithead buildings, complete with steam winding engine to lift the cages. Information about special deals is available from Trish Hall, Tel:0207 231811.

Welcome appeal

WELCOME Break service areas will be helping the Blue Peter Babylife Appeal by making collection bins for aluminium cans available.

The group, owned by THF, is hoping that coachloads of passengers will leave soft drink cans for them during stops, and that this will help finance new baby units throughout the UK.

One-stop shop for operators

PLEASUREWORLD is offering one-stop shopping for coach operators using East Anglia as a tourism destination.

With attractions such as Great Yarmouth's Sea Life Centre, the Pleasurewood Hills Theme Park also near Yarmouth, and the Bure Valley Railway due to open in July, there's at least a day's excursion if not two.

Pleasureworld is offering a number of mix and match visits, plus a few other ideas, from their marketing base. Contact Melody Wilkinson, on 0502 513626, for details.

Big events line-up at Leeds

KENT's ancient and traditionally-moated Leeds Castle has a comprehensive line-up of events planned for its 1990 calendar, many of which will be ideal for incoming passengers.

The season kicks off with an Easter Egg Hunt suitable for children, who scour the grounds for the 5,000 mini-eggs and special prize eggs.

Much more traditional is the Country Fayre, with its archery, falconry and open horse wagon rides. The show is supplemented by many craft stalls to provide the souvenirs. The event starts on May 5 for three days.

A festival of English wine might be a bit over the top for French tourists, but other traditional products will be available when it is held on May 26,27, and 28. June 9 and 10 see the International Balloon and Bentley Fiesta... English eccentricity par excellence.

August 23,24 and 25 sees Jazz at the Caz, an evening concert with food, real ale, cider and wine. There will be other musical events throughout summer, details from the organisers or Leeds Castle.

The summer ends with the Flower Festival - ideal for the elderly since it takes place within the castle itself - on Septemeber 21,22 and 23. Full details of all these events are from Leeds Castle Enterprises, Maidstone, Kent ME17 1PL, Tel: 0622 765400.

Banqueting in style

REDWORTH Hall, in County Durham, has provided a hall fit for a king to hold guests on its planned banqueting nights.

For under £20, diners will get a four-course meal, music and costumed entertainment in the lavishly-equipped baronial-styled hall pictured. Contact Thom Carroll, on 0388 772442, for a group tariff.

Brighton sans frontieres

BRIGHTON's contribution to European Tourism Year 1990 may well make a useful destination for both incoming business and UK tourists.

The capital town of the kiss-me-quick hat is devoting July 28 to August 5 to a series of events with a European flavour. July 28 sees the usual Brighton Lions Carnival, and plans are in the pipeline for a major sporting events, food tasting, other European languages in use at hotels and shops, and a grand English tea party.

Full details will be available from Bill Burnett, on Brighton 29801, extension 2370.

Ferry brochure

OLAU Line ferries has issued its 1990 group travel brochure featuring its new ship Olau Hollandia. Typical prices for the Sheerness-Vlissingen route are from £6 to £9 single low season, rising to £9 to £18 high season. Coaches normally travel free, and there are group catering arrangements. Contact Olau on 0795 666666 for brochures or reservations.

Bradford travel manual

BRADFORD has produced a superb travel manual ideal for operators looking at the area.

A surprising number of attractions are available, together with extensive accommodation and restaurants. The addresses and 'phone numbers of most useful contacts are listed, including handling agents and blue badge guides.

Copies of the manual are available free from the Bradford Enterprise Service, City Hall, Bradford, West Yorkshire, Tel:0274 733787, or 752179.

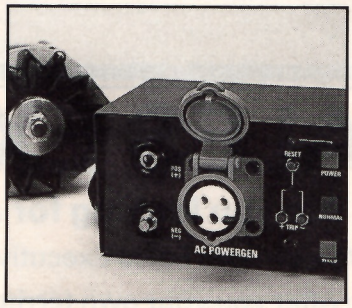
Big boost from Powergen

POWERGEN is the name which has been given to a device which can supplement or replace an existing on-site repair vehicle's alternator to give 110v or 240v supply, or give arc-welding power.

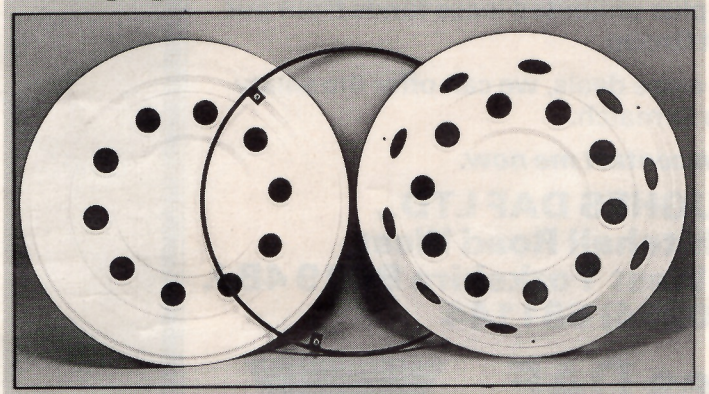
The AC Powergen can even be used as a battery booster. The big bonus, though, is that purchasers can now get a state-of-the-art ETAC hands-free car 'phone free with it.

The unit operates in each mode separately, giving a useful powerpoint for AC floodlights, drills, grinders, welding equipment up to 170 amp DC, but switches to standard 12v operation when the ignition is switched off.

AC Powergen is available from Driftgate Ltd, Sweda House, 24/30 New Street, Bucks HP20 2NA.



Keep your wheels in trim



TASTEFUL white plastic wheel trims from Hatcher Components Ltd may be a useful addition to a revamped coach.

The hard-wearing trims can be sprayed to match livery, or left white, while they are also easily positioned using a simple, patterned lock ring. A free six-page colour leaflet of Hatcher products is available from them at Broadwater Road, Framlingham, Suffolk IP13 9LL, Tel:0728 723675.

Made-to-measure service

BUYING clothing for staff is fraught with problems, not least of which is ensuring that the sizes you order tally with those of the maker.

Grantham Group has solved this irritation by sending vans - which carry a full range of gear - out to each client. The vans are equipped with a complete range of fitting and measuring devices, plus a trained tailor to ensure satisfaction.

The range of clothing carried would normally mean it can be supplied ex-stock, leaving only a minority of uniforms to adjust for outsized drivers. Grantham can be contacted through Sue Campbell, Tel:0272 741198.

Essential cover

INSURANCE to cover drivers against income lost through loss of licence due to ill health or accident, has been arranged through underwriters CAL by London broker City Liaison Bureau.

The cover provides up to two years' salary or £50,000 for around £7.50 for each £1,000 of benefit per year. City Liaison Bureau are on 01 489 0160.

New men appointed

PAUL Westbrook, former Duple and Dennis buyer, has joined Triscan fuel management systems as materials manager. New assistant development buyer is Peter Marsh, and southern sales engineer is Stephen Bailey.

Keeping it clean

WITH emission regulations on the not-too-distant horizon, the introduction of Webasto's soot converter may be very timely.

A simple device, it uses a little extra derv, ignited by a glow-plug, to burn soot into carbon dioxide before it exits the exhaust pipe. Fully automatic, the device operates while the engine is running.

Free booklet

MATCHPOWER Systems Ltd have launched a free booklet which helps explain the use of DC/AC inverters, diesel generators and auxilliary batteries in vehicles and workshops.

The booklet of istallation guidelines - a Freudian slip in the bumph suggests it contains 'Guilelines' - is available from Matchpower Systems Ltd, Unit 4, Warwick Road, Fairfield Industrial Estate, Louth, Lincolnshire, Tel:0507 600688.

Hard wearing screed

STRONGER than concrete and resistant to most solvents, oil, grease and acid, SBD's new screed is said to be ideal for PSV workshop floors.

The heavy-duty Easilay product is a compound of epoxy resin, hardener and aggregate. It can be applied to existing concrete using standard techniques, and is ready to work upon within 48 hours.

Colours include grey, red, beige and green. SBD Construction Products are at Dickens House, Maulden Road, Flitwick, Bedford MK45 5BY,

Management buy-out

AUTOMATIC washer makers Wilcomatic have been bought from Walker Greenbank in an £18.5 million cash deal by its management team.

Led by chairman Joe Casey, the team has been responsible for producing a £1.7 million profit in the last financial year, and has now been backed in its new direction by Nat West, Phildrew Ventures, and Italian washer maker Ceccato.

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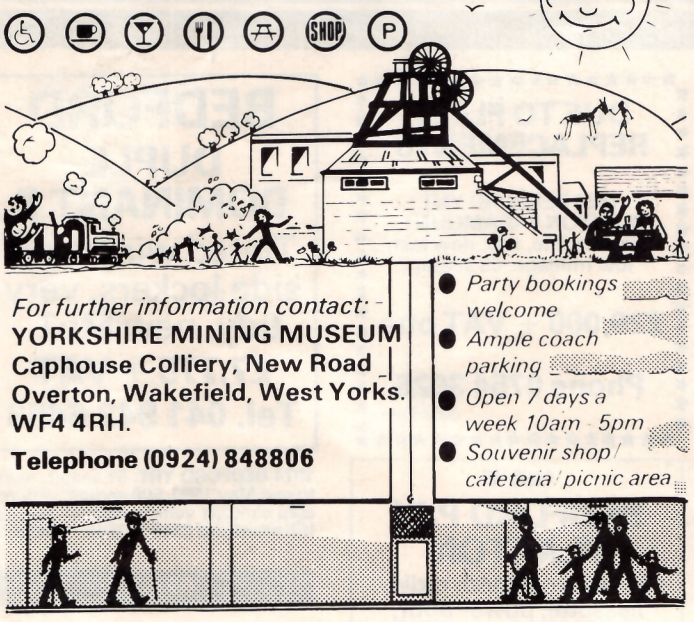

For further information contact:
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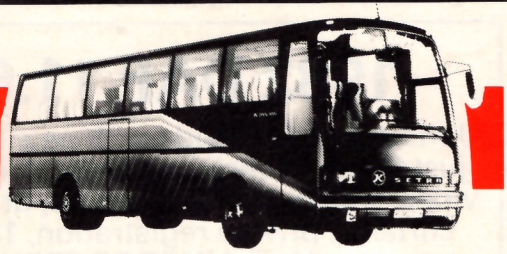

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(34262/UN)

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W REG B58 VOLVO, 52 seats, video, toilet and servery if required, tested December '90. **£23,500** + **VAT**

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(34128/UN)

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£45,000

Tel. 0533 440151

(34143/UN)

1981 W MERCEDES 508D. 21 seats, MoT Feb 1990. **£6,500 ono** + **VAT.**

1979 V BEDFORD YLQ. 45 [SOLD], new engine [SOLD] 1990. **£7,000 ono** + **VAT.**

1974 M LEYLAND LEOPARD. 53 seats, MoT April 1990. **£5,000 ono** + **VAT.**

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(34193/UN)

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53 recliners, wired for TV and video, courier seat, curtains etc. MoT March '90, good condition. **£29,495 ono**

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26 seater, excellent condition, MoT Aug '90. **£22,495 ono**

Tel. 051 652 5324 day, 051 678 7163 eve

(34176/UN)

1982 VOLVO B10M

Dhuple bodywork, MoT Oct 1990. **£29,000** + **VAT**

1985 BEDFORD YNV

Plaxton Paramount, MoT Feb 1990. **£39,000** + **VAT**

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Double deckers, ECW bodywork, MoT Nov 1990. **CHOICE OF TWO. £6,000** + **VAT**

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(34139/UN)

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1979 BEDFORD YMT PLAXTON SUPREME IV, (53), power door, MoT March 1990.

1978 (T) FORD PLAXTON SUPREME, (53), re-upholstered, very clean, power door and radio, MoT October 1990.

1978 BEDFORD YMT PLAXTON SUPREME EXPRESS, MoT June 1990, power doors.

Evington, Leicester LE5 6DQ

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(34609/UN)

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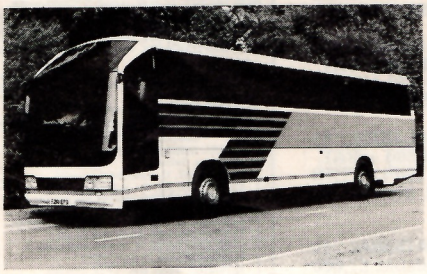

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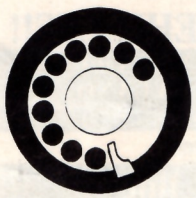

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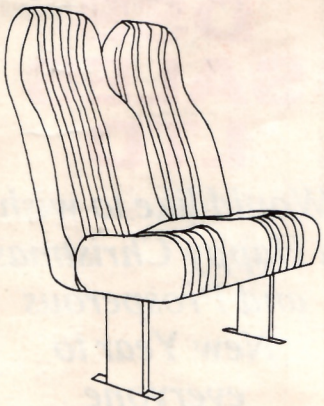

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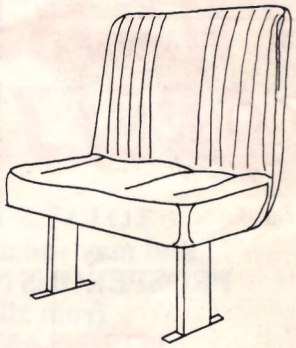

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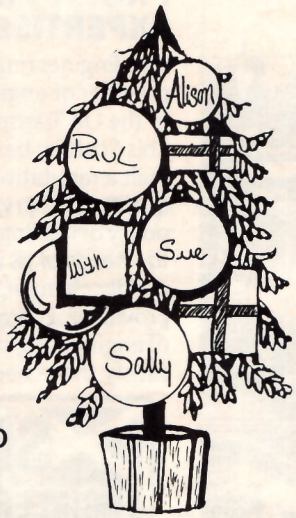

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CHRISTMAS

GREETINGS

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

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and may you all enjoy a
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ROBINS AND DAY
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(34258/XG)

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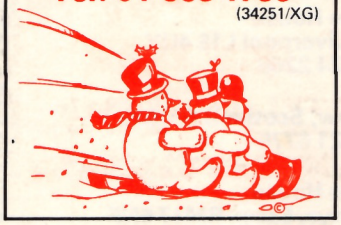

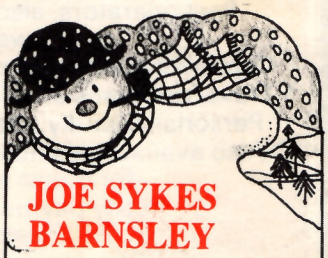

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ANCHORAGE HOTEL (TORQUAY)
WEST BOURNE HOTEL (NORTH DEVON)
AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL
(34284/XG)

A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR CUSTOMERS

from Anne & Denise
at
ECONOMY TEXTILES
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(34241/XG)

"We wish you a Merry Charisma's, We wish you a Merry Charisma's, We wish you a Merry Charisma's and a Happy New Year."

FROM ALL AT

Ensignbus

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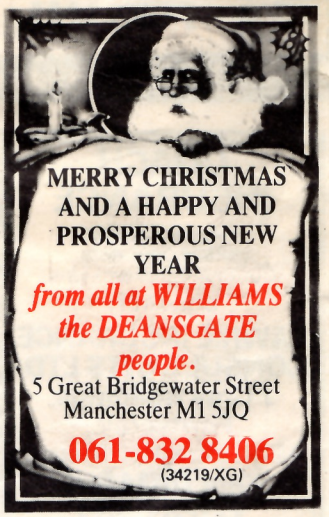

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY AND PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR
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